From the Army Acquisition Executive
Supporting an Army at War

Supporting an Army at war is critical both tactically and strategically. From a tactical standpoint, we are working with our sister services and industry to ensure that our Soldiers have the weapon systems and equipment they need to successfully carry out their duties. Our primary focus is on reducing risk to our Soldiers so they can accomplish their mission safely and effectively and return home.

> "To all the men and women in our military – every Sailor, every Soldier, every Airman, every Coast Guardsman, every Marine — I say this: your mission is defined. Your objectives are clear. Your goal is just. You have my full confidence, and you will have every tool you need to carry out your duty. ... The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waiver, we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail."
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> President George W. Bush
> Oct. 7, 2001

As we wage the global war on terror, we continue to improve our acquisition and fielding processes. In 2002, we implemented the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) to ensure that all units — Active and Reserve — deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan with the latest available equipment. Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier, under the leadership of BG James R. Moran, is responsible for developing RFI to meet the needs of the individual Soldier rapidly in the categories of force protection/mobility, lethality, Soldier mission-essential equipment and individual weapons/optics. In coordination with field commanders and Soldiers, RFI now provides Soldiers with more than 40 mission-essential equipment and clothing items, including the Advanced Combat Helmet and accessories, knee and elbow pads, close-combat optics, hydration systems and much more. As of May 2004, 5,000 RFI equipment sets are air-shipped each week for in-theater issue to units in Iraq. RFI will have equipped more than 120,000 Soldiers by the end of this fiscal year. In addition, we are accelerating fielding of select future capabilities, including thermal weapon sights, enhanced night vision goggles and the Future Combat Rifle. Clearly, PEO Soldier amplifies the message that what we do impacts our Soldiers, their safety and their effectiveness every day.

The Army also instituted the Rapid Equipping Force (REF), which is led by COL Bruce Jette. REF teams work directly with operational commanders in *Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF)* and *Enduring Freedom (OEF)* to find promising technology solutions to identified operational requirements. These solutions may be off-the-shelf or near-term developmental items that can be made available quickly. We are acting aggressively to protect the force with items as sophisticated as the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment, a 360-degree surveillance device suspended from an Aerostat balloon or atop a tower, to something as inexpensive as shims that enable Soldiers searching for weapons in Iraq to nondestructively open padlocks. And, there are many more items, including the Well-CAM, a remote video system that enables Soldiers to search for weapons in wells and other inaccessible areas and, of course, the PackBot, an unmanned ground vehicle used to clear caves, bunkers and compounds so Soldiers are not put in harm's way unnecessarily. And when, from time to time, a PackBot is destroyed, we know a Soldier's life has been saved. The REF also works hand-in-hand with the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Task Force to mitigate the effects of IEDs. Together, their teams in *OIF* and *OEF* are conducting analysis and training Soldiers in counter-IED tactics, techniques and procedures.

Protection of the Soldier is paramount. Interceptor Body Armor (IBA), which includes an outer tactical vest plus either the Small Arms Protective Inserts (SAPIs) or slightly heavier plates made from Kevlar or similar products, provides the best individual ballistic protection available in the world. IBA production is operating at the maximum level industry can support and is delivering 25,000 sets each month — or enough body armor in theater to equip every Soldier and DOD civilian in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait. This is a great example of the responsiveness of America's defense industrial base. Just 2 years ago, one manufacturer was producing 2,000 SAPI plates monthly. We now have 7 suppliers producing 25,000 sets a month.

Other significant force protection programs include the up-armored Humvees. The requirement has steadily increased from 235 in August 2003 to more than 4,400 by October 2004. Production rates are now approaching 220 per month and climbing to 300 vehicles by July, with a capability of reaching 450 vehicles a month.

Complementing this effort is the Army's program to add ballistic protection to light vehicles and selected aviation platforms. We are well on our way to adding ballistic protection to more than 11,000 vehicles and aircraft. To ensure that these kits deliver the expected protection and do not create a separate danger to Soldiers by overloading vehicles or creating shrapnel, the Army has extensively tested these kits against a variety of expected threats. More than 3,000 armor kits have already been installed, mostly on Humvees, with additional kits being delivered to meet the current requirement as quickly as possible. In addition, we are installing reactive armor tile sets to our roughly 600 Bradley Fighting Vehicles in *OIF*.

As we meet our ongoing requirements, we are also looking to the future to support an Army at war from a strategic standpoint. We are taking the lessons we're learning in *OIF* and *OEF* and planning to meet future requirements better and faster. It is clear that when we are at war, we must collapse the timeline — from months to weeks to days to hours — that it takes to get weapon systems and equipment to our Soldiers. It is very important that we plan now for future conflict because, as any military historian will tell you, it is inevitable that we will end up in another war. And, it is now that we must take the necessary steps to ensure that in the next war our industrial partners will be able to surge again very quickly from either cold production or no production at all. Achieving this will not be easy; but, achieve it we must. For I believe this will be a key factor in our maintaining the most capable, most powerful and most respected Army the world has ever known. While supporting an Army at war, we continue to look to the future.

Thank all of you for making our Army what it is and what it will be.

Claude M. Bolton Jr.
Army Acquisition Executive